



A Summary of Recreational Spiny Lobster Landings and Effort in Florida

Beginning with a pilot study in 1991, the Florida Marine Research Institute (FMRI) has conducted annual mail surveys of recreational spiny lobster (crawfish) license holders. These surveys allow us to estimate recreational lobster landings and fishing effort statewide and regionally during the Special Two-Day Sport Season and during the first month of the regular lobster fishing season, when the majority of recreational lobster fishing occurs. The surveys also provide details about fisher demographics and their opinions about lobster fishery management. In 2001, we joined with NOAA's Special Projects Office and expanded the survey to include a detailed economic study of recreational lobster fishing. The results of that study are summarized in the companion information sheet. Here, we briefly summarize trends in lobster fishing effort and landings statewide and in Monroe County from the 1993-94 through the 2001-02 fishing season.



season through the 2000-01 season, 13% to 21% of license holders that participated in the Special Season did not fish for lobster again during the regular lobster fishing season.

Estimated Number of Licensed Fishers - Special Season					
	STATEWIDE	MONROE COUNTY			FISHED ONLY SPECIAL SEASON
	TOTAL	TOTAL	VISITORS	RESIDENTS	
1993	47,000	27,000	19,000	7,000	*
1994	50,000	24,000	18,000	5,000	*
1995	33,000	19,000	13,000	6,000	*
1996	48,000	32,000	24,000	9,000	*
1997	52,000	31,000	24,000	7,000	*
1998	42,000	24,000	18,000	7,000	6,000
1999	56,000	37,000	29,000	8,000	13,000
2000	63,000	37,000	29,000	8,000	13,000
2001	45,000	28,000	21,000	6,000	*

Special Two-Day Sport Season

Participation

The number of licensed fishers participating in the Special Two-Day Sport Season statewide from 1993 through 2001 has varied without a discernable trend from approximately 33,000 (1995) to 63,000 (1999). In addition to these fishers, we estimate that the number of people statewide participating in the Special Season that did not require a license (those under 16 or over 65 years of age) to be about a number equivalent to approximately 16% of the total number of licensed fishers. (20% in Monroe County). Most of the fishing effort was concentrated in Monroe County, where about 60% of license holders lobster fish annually. About 75% of those license holders reside outside of Monroe County. From the 1998-99

Landings

The estimated number of lobsters caught during the Special Season has also varied without trend over the same period of time, ranging from approximately



216,000 to 529,000 lobsters. About two-thirds of the total number of lobsters landed

SPECIAL SEASON LOBSTERS LANDED			
	STATEWIDE	MONROE COUNTY	
	NUMBERS OF LOBSTERS	NUMBERS OF LOBSTERS	PERCENT OF STATEWIDE TOTAL
1993	331,000	225,000	68%
1994	362,000	219,000	60%
1995	216,000	141,000	65%
1996	354,000	253,000	71%
1997	472,000	315,000	67%
1998	263,000	161,000	61%
1999	529,000	370,000	70%
2000	424,000	285,000	67%
2001	280,000	170,000	61%

statewide were caught in Monroe County.

Survey Respondents' Opinions

From 1998 to 2000, we asked survey recipients whether they felt the Special Season should continue in its present format, whether it should be modified, or whether it should be discontinued altogether. Clear differences in responses to this question were evident between residents of Monroe County and non-residents. The majority of Monroe County residents that did not participate in the season indicated that they would like it to be discontinued. Those residents that did participate were about evenly split as to whether to continue the season without changes or to discontinue it. Most (64%) of the survey respondents that traveled from elsewhere to Monroe County for the Special Season indicated they would like the season to

	Fished Special Season in Monroe County	No Opinion	Continue Season without Changes	Continue Season with Changes	End Season
Monroe County Residents	No	8%	22%	16%	54%
	Yes	1%	37%	21%	40%
Non-Residents	No	14%	50%	21%	15%
	Yes	4%	64%	27%	5%

continue unchanged.

Regular Season

Participation

The number of lobster license holders statewide that fished during the first month of the regular season (opening day to Labor Day) from 1993 through 2001 also varied without a discernable trend from approximately 50,000 (2001) to 73,000 (1994 & 1995). We estimate that the number of people statewide participating in the regular season that did not require a license to be a number equivalent to approximately 18% of total number of license fishers (15% in Monroe County). Like the Special Season, most of the fishing effort was concentrated in Monroe County (~ 60%). Typically, more than 80% of those license holders resided outside of Monroe County. From the 1998-99 through the 2001-02 fishing season there were approximately 15,000 to 18,000 licensed fishers on the water in Monroe County on the opening day of the season.

	STATE/WIDE	MONROE COUNTY			FISHED ON OPENING DAY
	TOTAL	TOTAL	VISITORS	RESIDENTS	
1993	68,000	43,000	35,000	8,000	*
1994	73,000	45,000	39,000	6,000	*
1995	73,000	45,000	39,000	6,000	*
1996	71,000	50,000	42,000	8,000	*
1997	76,000	56,000	48,000	8,000	*
1998	54,000	34,000	27,000	7,000	15,000
1999	69,000	44,000	39,000	5,000	17,000
2000	66,000	41,000	31,000	10,000	18,000
2001	50,000	31,000	25,000	6,000	17,000

Landings

The estimated number of lobsters caught during the first month of the regular season ranged from approximately 784,000 (2001) to 1,786,000 lobsters (1999) and, like the Special Season, landings have varied without trend. Monroe County accounted for the largest proportion of statewide landings. Since the 1993-94 fishing season, the combined lobster landings from the Special Two-Day Season and the first month of the regular season has accounted for about 25% of the total annual spiny lobster catch statewide.

	STATEWIDE	MONROE COUNTY	
	NUMBERS OF LOBSTERS	NUMBERS OF LOBSTERS	PERCENT OF STATEWIDE TOTAL
1993	1,415,000	876,000	62%
1994	1,320,000	855,000	65%
1995	1,399,000	966,000	69%
1996	1,374,000	924,000	67%
1997	1,666,000	1,208,000	73%
1998	885,000	606,000	68%
1999	1,786,000	1,147,000	64%
2000	1,440,000	882,000	61%
2001	784,000	465,000	59%

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